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Audience with members of the Board of Directors of the independent autonomous trade union "Solidarnosc"

This morning, before the General Audience, the Holy Father Francis received in audience in the Vatican the members of the Board of Directors of the Polish autonomous independent trade union "Solidarnosc", on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of its founding.

The following are the words the Pope addressed to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I cordially welcome you and thank you for this visit, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the independent and autonomous trade union "Solidarnosc" in Poland. As recent history shows, it has been the protagonist of political and social changes in your country and has also played an inspiring role beyond its borders.

I congratulate you on your service to the common good and to the various professional groups in Poland; and I wish to recall that the sincere pursuit of goodness, truth and justice by individuals and groups is always accompanied by the presence of God (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 71). Forty years ago, Saint John Paul II invoked for his fellow countrymen this very presence of God and the breath of the Holy Spirit, exclaiming: "Let your Spirit come down! And renew the face of the earth. Of this land!" (*Homily*, Warsaw, 2 June 1979).

A sign of openness to the Spirit of God is the attitude of solidarity with people deprived of their inalienable rights, solidarity that is found in the fields of work and study, in social, economic, political and international relations (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 205). "The word 'solidarity' is a little worn and at time poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity" (*ibid.*, 188). It is a sensitivity

to the voice of brothers and sisters who have been deprived of the right to decent working conditions, to the just reward necessary to support the family, to health care or to rest.

“In her dialogue with the State and with society, the Church does not have solutions for every particular issue”. Nevertheless, “Together with the various sectors of society, she supports those programmes which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good” (*ibid.*, 241). It must be remembered that the condition for positive changes in social structures is above all a change in mentality, convictions and attitudes, in which the younger generations must be educated. Otherwise, sooner or later, the new structures themselves will no longer serve the common good, but particular groups, and will become corrupt, oppressive and ineffective, and even harmful (cf. *ibid.*, 189).

I ask God for the gifts of the Holy Spirit for you and for all the members of your union, so that the initiatives you undertake may always be inspired by the Christian rule: “Bear one another’s burdens” (*Gal* 6: 2). In invoking the intercession of the Mother of God, Queen of Poland, I hope for the fruitful continuation of your work of assistance and support. God bless you!
